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RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 5929
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 1140
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 3948
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 5252
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 1316
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA PRIORITY 3380
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 2616
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 000774

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TAGS: PGOV PTER KDEM NP

SUBJECT: NEPAL: NC-D PARTY CHIEF PLEASED THAT ELECTION

DELAYED

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

Summary

¶1. (C) President of the Nepali Congress-Democratic (NC-D) Sher Bahadur Deuba stated to the Ambassador April 16 that it was good that the Constituent Assembly election had been delayed from its planned June 20 date. The situation in the countryside was still bad, and a free and fair election would not be possible by that time. An April 15 meeting between the leaders of the seven parties and the Maoists had been inconclusive as to when a new election date would be set. Deuba suspected that another meeting would not be held for at least a week. The Interim Parliament would probably pass a second amendment to the Interim Constitution soon. Deuba added that the NC-D and the Nepali Congress (NC) would probably unify before an election.

Election Delayed; Situation Not Positive

¶2. (C) In a meeting on April 16, Sher Bahadur Deuba, President of the NC-D, told the Ambassador that he was pleased the Constituent Assembly election date had been delayed from the June 20 date proposed by the seven parties and the Maoists upon the formation of the Interim Government on April 1. The situation in the countryside was still bad, and there was not enough security to hold anything close to a free and fair election by that date.

Meeting Inconclusive

¶3. (C) Deuba reported that the meeting between the leaders of the seven parties and the Maoists on April 15 to decide a new date for the election had ended inconclusively. The Maoists were trying to move Nepal toward a republic immediately, with Maoist chief Prachanda calling for the Parliament to declare a republic and get rid of King Gyanendra. Deuba's wife, Arju Deuba, said that this ploy by the Maoists was not actually targeting the King; it was an attempt to eviscerate the Nepal Army. Deuba opined that the Interim Parliament did not have enough legitimacy to terminate the monarchy, especially since it was un-elected. He noted that Madhav Kumar Nepal, General

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Leninist (CPN-UML), had agreed in the meeting, and had called for a referendum on the monarchy as a compromise. Deuba worried that the King's seriously flawed leadership started to look better to people in Nepal as the situation got worse.

Another meeting among the eight parties was planned for the week of April 23, but Deuba was unsure whether a solution would be found then either.

Second Amendment Soon

¶4. (C) The NC-D chief suspected that the Interim Parliament would pass a second amendment to the Interim Constitution soon. The second amendment would: officially postpone the Constituent Assembly election, allow the Interim Parliament to remove the Prime Minister with a two-thirds vote, and provide for the removal of the King and declaration of a republic by a two-thirds vote if the King interfered with election process.

NC and NC-D Reunification

¶5. (C) Deuba said that he planned to register the NC-D as a separate political party with the Election Commission, but that it was just a way to gain leverage in reunification negotiations with Prime Minister Koirala. The NC and NC-D would almost definitely reunify before the election to a Constituent Assembly. Deuba stated that it was "critical" that the two parties combine into one.

Comment

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¶6. (C) NC-D chief and former Prime Minister Deuba was one of the first Nepali leaders to state publicly several weeks ago that a June election was a near impossibility. His strong law-and-order position is also well known. We share his concerns about the Interim Parliament making the potentially fateful decision to abolish the monarchy. One-third of its members never stood for election and the remaining two-thirds would have had to run again by 2004 had it not been for the Maoist insurgency. A referendum on the monarchy could have advantages, but it would be costly, and as the Speaker of the Interim Parliament told the Ambassador April 16, if the security situation did not permit a Constituent Assembly election on June 20, it would also not allow a referendum on the monarchy. That said, an extended period of uncertainty over Nepal's future steps would only further destabilize matters here.

MORIARTY